

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 12, 14 and 17, 18 20-26 and 29-56 are pending in the application. Claim 19 is canceled; and Claims 12, 20, 45, 49 and 56 are amended by the present amendment. Support for the amended claims can be found in the original specification, claims and drawings.¹ No new matter is presented.

In the outstanding Official Action, Claims 12, 14, 18, 23, 26, 29-32, 39-49 and 56 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Suzuki et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,452,687, hereinafter “Suzuki”) in view of Ono (JP 2001-194613); Claim 17 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Suzuki in view of Ono and Kanehashi (JP 11-231240); Claims 33-34 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Suzuki in view of Ono and Toda (U.S. Pregrant Pub. 2001/0017645); Claims 35-38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Suzuki in view of Ono and Azumai et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,320,682, hereinafter “Azumai”); Claims 19-22 and 24-25 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims; and Claims 50-55 are allowed.

Applicant appreciatively acknowledges the indication of allowable subject matter. In response, independent Claims 12, 45, 49 and 56 are amended to incorporate the subject matter of Claim 19, which was cited in the Official Action as reciting allowable subject matter. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that amended independent Claims 12, 45, 49 and 56 recite novel features clearly not taught or rendered obvious by the applied references, as noted in the Official Action.

¹ E.g., specification, original Claim 19.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of independent Claims 12, 45, 49 and 56 (and the claims that depend therefrom) under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) be withdrawn.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the foregoing comments, it is respectfully submitted that the invention defined by Claims 12, 14 and 17, 18 20-26 and 29-56 is patentably distinguishing over the applied references. The present application is therefore believed to be in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of the application is therefore requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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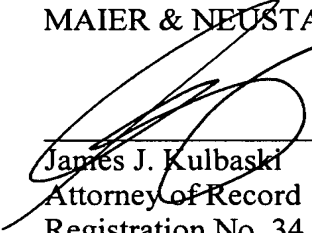
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